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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000224

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [YI](#) [UNMIK](#)  
SUBJECT: KOSOVO GOVERNING COALITION GROWS PROGRESSIVELY  
WEAKER; OPPOSITION EMBOLDENED

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Weak leadership, opposition enticements, and the departure of AAK leader Ramush Haradinaj for the Hague have all combined to progressively undermine the governing coalition of Kosovo, which continues to limp along despite intensified pressure from a variety of sources. The internal politics of the largest party in the coalition, the LDK, took a turn for the worse March 20 when one of the party's Vice-Chairmen (and government Deputy Prime Minister) Lutfi Haziri brazenly announced -- without the party hierarchy's approval -- that the LDK would enter into coalition with the opposition PDK in key eastern Kosovo municipalities, implying strongly that a central-level coalition between the LDK and PDK could be anticipated sometime soon. The PDK has seized on the disarray in the LDK to gain advantage both for its municipal branches and for the voracious political ambition of PDK president Hashim Thaci. It is not clear where Haziri's rogue actions will take the LDK, or whether his actions will in fact stand, but the likelihood of the national coalition holding over time is steadily diminishing. The primary element holding Thaci back from a full-blown assault on the government is USG insistence (echoed this past week by Brussels in a strong message to Thaci) that a reformulated government would result in chaos, the walkout of key AAK government ministers, and a corresponding black eye for Kosovo just at the time when its case is being considered in the UN Security Council. End summary.

LDK Disarray Increasingly Apparent

12. (C) While the departure of LDK rebels after current party president Sejdiu's victory over rival Nexhat Daci last fall was not enough to tear the LDK apart, it appears that Sejdiu's own indecisiveness and lack of attention to party and coalition matters is having much the same effect. As post has reported, Daci was able to carve off six of the LDK's caucus members in the Kosovo Assembly, though none of these new "LDD" caucus members has yet chosen to challenge the LDK's positions or collude with the opposition in a no-confidence motion. More significantly, however, the

hemorrhage of LDK members in important LDK-dominated eastern and central Kosovo municipalities -- Gjilane, Ferizaj, Kamenica, and others -- has left the LDK in those localities vulnerable to their newly-anointed LDD opponents and susceptible to PDK blandishments. The focal point for this stew of local politics has been Gjilane, where the almost wholesale defection of LDK members to Daci's LDD (orchestrated by the corrupt and incorrigible mayor Hyseni, previously LDK and now LDD) led the rump LDK municipal leadership to turn in desperation to their PDK colleagues for support. PDK, never a party to let an opportunity slide, was gladly there to pick up the pieces of the LDK-LDD split.

13. (C) In what many considered to be an astounding development, LDK Vice-Chairman (one of five) and Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister Lutfi Haziri -- a Gjilane native still active in the political scene there -- announced March 20 in a joint press conference with PDK Deputy Chairman (and E.O. listee) Rustem Mustafa (Remi) that the LDK and PDK would form a broad series of coalitions in seven municipalities throughout Kosovo, mainly in the east. Haziri would not discount speculation that a national level coalition was in the offing, going so far as to proclaim that he would "welcome Thaci as his boss" (i.e., as the prime minister). LDK party leaders, including acting president Eqrem Krieziu -- who had only the day before publicly deemed the LDK-AAK governing coalition alive and well -- were rocked back on their heels by Haziri's bold move. It is uncertain that the LDK hierarchy will allow Haziri's announcement or the new municipal coalition arrangements to stand, and the possibility that they will take action against Haziri for blatantly ignoring party policy is real, raising the specter of escalating infighting within the LDK as a result of these divisions.

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#### PDK Gleefully Ready to Reap the Spoils

14. (C) Watching the melee is Hashim Thaci, whose undisguised pleasure at the optic of LDK weakness has been evinced in bolder and bolder statements about the likelihood of a new coalition and the corrupt nature of the existing government. Thaci's timing, of course, is also linked to the departure of Ramush Haradinaj to the Hague; with Ramush gone, the inherent fragility of the AAK has become startlingly evident and its government ministers appear increasingly adrift in the absence of firm guidance by the Prime Minister or Haradinaj's appointed party successor, the congenial but ineffective Ahmet Isufi. The AAK has made it clear that, in the event of an LDK-PDK coalition, its ministers would walk out of the government, and in truth it is certain that Thaci would want as much.

#### Comment

15. (C) With fewer barriers to his ambitions in either the LDK or AAK context, Thaci smells an opportunity almost too good to pass up. Most disturbing, even beyond the temptation of the opposition and LDK rebels to bring the current government down, are the increasing calls -- emanating mainly from Thaci's camp -- to disband the Unity Team. The reasoning is simple: who needs a Unity Team when a Unity Government is the preferred option? Our view, of course, is quite the opposite; the Unity Team is still very much needed to accomplish the transition-related objectives of the next few critical months, while a Unity Government would throw the governing apparatus of Kosovo into chaos for a prolonged period and provide proof positive to those in the international community who argue the immaturity of Kosovo's political leadership. We have conveyed to both Thaci and the LDK leaders that the need for stability remains paramount while Kosovo's case is being considered in the Security Council, and EU Foreign Policy chief Solana delivered an equally strong message in Brussels to Thaci last week. We may not be able to give this fragile government a boost

forever -- and certainly not if coalition leaders are unwilling to do the hard work themselves to maintain order and discipline -- but we will be firm with all parties that Kosovo's interests (not their own ambitions) must be preeminent in this period.

¶6. (U) Post does not clear this message for release to UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.  
KAIDANOW